

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ
AMCONSUL BELIZE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GT, BH, SHUM
SUBJ: LUCAS PRESS CONFERENCE; OTHER POST-ELECTION NEWS

1. IN HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE AS PRESIDENT-ELECT, GENERAL ROMEO LUCAS MARCH 13 CALLED FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION. HE COVERED A VARIETY OF TOPICS:

- A. BELIZE: HE ASKED TO BE EXCUSED FROM SPEAKING ON THIS SUBJECT SINCE IT WAS UNDER DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PARTIES CONCERNED. (CORNERED BY A REPORTER ON ELECTION DAY, LUCAS WAS QUOTED AS OPPOSING ANY "PARTITION" FORMULA.)
- B. US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY: HE WOULD RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND EVERY CITIZEN WOULD ENJOY THE PROTECTION OF THE LAW.
- C. INSCRIPTION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES: A DEFINITE YES. (THIS WILL BE INTERPRETED AS A POLITICAL PAYOFF TO THE FUR WHOSE ABSENTION CAMPAIGN IS CONCEDED TO HAVE CUT INTO THE PERALTA MENDEZ VOTE.)
- D. GUERRILLAS: THE PROBLEM, SAID LUCAS, MUST BE ATTACKED "MORE AT THE CAUSE THAN THE EFFECT".

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2. THE MLN CONTINUES TO PROTEST THE ELECTION RESULTS. YESTERDAY'S (MARCH 13) DEMONSTRATION (PROBABLY ON THE LOWER SIDE OF PRESS ESTIMATES RANGING FROM 3,000 TO 15,000 PERSONS) AND MARCH DOWNTOWN WAS PEACEFUL; ANOTHER IS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CLARIFIED THAT THEIR DEPUTIES HAD NOT TAKEN PART IN THE CONGRESSIONAL VOTE FOR PRESIDENT ON MONDAY AS THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY

NEUTRAL. THEY DO PLAN A DIALOG WITH OTHER POLITICAL SECTORS TO RESTRUCTURE THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND TO FIND WAY TO DEVELOP A TRULY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

3. STILL AWAITED ARE OFFICIAL RETURNS FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. CERTIFICATION OF FIGURES IN THESE CASES IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL.

4. AN UNEXPLODED GRXDADE WAS FOUND IN FRONT OF THE CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES AND REMOVED. THE PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE DENIED THE GOVERNMENT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF TWO SECONDARY STUDENTS (GUATEMALA 1521). THE POLICE, HOWEVER, STATED THAT THE YOUTHS HAD BEEN TURNED OVER TO A JUVENILE COURT FOR VANDALISM ON THE COMPLAINT OF A NIGHT WATCHMAN. SECURITY FORCES CONTINUE ON THE ALERT AND ARE SCREENING FOR WEAPONS TRAFFIC COMING INTO THE CAPITAL. ONE OF THE MORE EFFECTIVE METHODS TO REDUCE THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE HAS BEEN TO PROHIBIT OPEN TRUCKS FROM TRANSPORTING PASSENGERS INTO TOWN. IN POPTUN, DEPARTMENT OF PETEN, A MILITARY PATROL WAS ATTACKED AND ITS LEADER KILLED. THE MILITARY RELEASED A STATEMENT CHARGING UNSPECIFIED "POLITICAL" MOTIVES AND IDENTIFYING BY NAME ONE OF THE ATTACKERS WHO WAS KILLED IN THE CLASH.

5. COMMENT: ELECTION FEVER SEEMS TO BE DYING DOWN RAPIDLY. THE NAME CALLING BETWEEN THE MLN AND THE LUCAS CAMP MAY CONTINUE FOR A TIME, HOWEVER. ONE REASON IS THE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PID/PR WILL HAVE 35 DEPUTIES OUT OF 61 IN THE NEW CONGRESS. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A HIGH PR OFFICIAL, AN EMBASSY OFFICER WAS TOLD THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTED A MINORITY IN CONGRESS AND WOULD NEED THE DCG (WHICH SUPPOSEDLY WAS TRYING TO EXACT A HIGH PRICE FOR ITS SUPPORT). BASING OUR ESTIMATE ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VOTES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, WE CALCULATE THAT THE PR/PID WOULD NOT COME CLOSE TO COMMANDING A MAJORITY IN THE NEW CONGRESS.

BOSTER

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